

2 JOHN

INTRODUCTION

A man whom I knew years ago in the South had the best way to divide the three epistles of John that I have ever heard. He called them "one-eyed John," "two-eyed John," and "three-eyed John." I do not think you will forget the three epistles of John if you remember them like this. That man, by the way, was one of the three conservative ministers in the community in which I served in Nashville, Tennessee, at that time. He was a real brother in Christ. Any Christian, regardless of his race, nationality, or station in life, if he is right on the inside, if he has been born again, is my brother. That is the great truth taught in First John which will be continued in Second and Third John with a different emphasis.

We are considering here, then, "two-eyed John." Your first impression, I am sure, is the brevity of these two last epistles. It is something that is almost startling. You might wonder why just thirteen verses in the second epistle and fourteen verses in the third epistle should be included in the Scriptures. Both of the epistles are very brief indeed. Someone will say, "Doesn't their brevity discount their message? Obviously, John didn't have too much to say." Not at all. Their brevity does not in any way take away from the importance of these epistles. In fact, it actually enhances them. Although they are very brief, these epistles are very important, and they are essential for getting a proper perspective of the first epistle and avoiding a perverted viewpoint. Let me illustrate it like this. My doctor at one time gave me two kinds of medication that I was to take whenever I suffered certain symptoms. One was a pill so small that I had trouble locating it in the bottle. The other was a capsule which looked like it was too big to swallow. I needed almost a gallon of water to get it down -- I had to float it first! But I discovered in using both of them that the smaller one, the teeny-weeny one, was the more potent of the two. In fact, I found out it was the more important one: if the big one didn't work, then I used the little one. So it is with Second and Third John. Their brevity does not make them less potent.

The writer of this epistle is the apostle John. We call him the apostle of love. The Lord Jesus called him a "son of thunder" (see [Mark 3:17](#)). I think you can add to the thunder a little lightning, for in his epistles he makes it very clear that you must exhibit love to the brethren or you are not a child of God. John wrote this epistle around B.C. 90-100.

This epistle is like the Book of Philemon in that it is a personal letter. It is written by John to "the elect lady." The question is often asked whether the Greek word *electa* is a title or whether it refers to a Christian lady in the early church by the name of Electa. You must recall that John is the apostle who writes of the family of God. Paul writes of the church of God, while Peter writes of the government of God. If you will keep that in the background of your thinking as you come to these epistles written by these different men, it will help you understand many things they are saying. Regardless of whether it is addressed to an individual or to a church, John is thinking of it in the context of the family of God. Apparently, there was some Christian lady or a local church which was extending hospitality to all those who claimed to be Christian, although some were

heretics who denied the deity of Christ and the other great truths of the Christian faith. John warns here in this epistle against entertaining such folk. This is actually the purpose of this little epistle.

The theme of this epistle is: "For truth's sake." When truth and love come into conflict, truth is the one that is to predominate; it is the one that has top priority. Have you noticed that in [1Corinthians 13:13](#) Paul didn't say, "Now abideth faith, hope, truth, and love"? He just said, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love]." But when truth is brought in, then truth comes first.

In other words, truth is worth contending for, and it is wrong to receive false teachers. This is the position that I take very definitely. I believe that the truth in the Word of God is worth contending for. When I say truth, I mean, first, that which is basic to the fact that the Bible is the Word of God -- there is no question in my mind about it. The second thing of essential importance is the deity of Christ and His work upon the Cross for us. When I meet a man who is true on these essentials, then he and I can disagree on nonessentials. I have a very good friend who is a Pentecostal preacher. When we play golf, he and I naturally get into a friendly argument. I always end up by saying to him, "Brother, you and I agree on so many things. I love to hear you talk about the Lord Jesus and about His death on the Cross. You thrill my heart when I hear you talk about those things. But I want you to know that we disagree on a few points, and I'm going to pray for you because I think you are wrong." Well, you know he turns around and says the same thing to me, and we leave each other laughing. As far as I know, that man has never said an unkind word to me or about me. He is my brother. I wish he could see some things as I do, but it will just have to be that way until he gets a little more light -- and I want to be patient with him! But he stands true on the inspiration of the Scriptures, he stands true on the deity of Christ, and he stands true on the fact that Christ died for us. When a man does that, he's my brother, and I cannot escape that fact.

The key word in John's first epistle is love, but it is a love that is confined to the family of God. The little children are to love each other in the family of God. This is the mark of a child of God: he loves Christ, and he loves the brethren. How God's little children are to love each other is the entire sum and substance of that epistle.

It would be helpful to go back to the first epistle and pick up this thought again: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" ([1John 3:10](#)). John purposely cast this truth in the negative so that there would be no way in the world that any individual who claims to be a Christian and does not measure up could wiggle out of it. You cannot wiggle out of this: if you do not practice righteousness in your life, you are not of God. This is the outward badge of a child of God. You are to know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, and the proof to others is that you practice righteousness in your life. And if you do not love your brother (your Christian brother -- this is not the universal brotherhood of man, for the Bible does not teach that), then you are not a child of God. I didn't say this -- John said it. If you don't like it, then you take it up with him. John said that you can tell if someone is a genuine believer by his righteous life and his love for other Christians.

But what about the lost sinner who is not in the family of God? Are we to love him? Well, we are told in the Gospel of John: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)). Follow me carefully now. We are to love people to the extent of taking the gospel to them. We see in the Book of Jonah that Jonah did not love the Ninevites, but God sent him there because God loved them and God said, "Since I love them and they have turned to Me, Jonah, I want you to love them also." This is the relationship the child of God is to have to the lost world. You cannot love the sinners and their sin -- we are not asked to do that. We are asked to love them enough to take the gospel to them. That is the important thing. We are to love them in that sense because God loves them. And then, when they turn to Christ, we will love them also.

Now another question arises: What is to be our relationship to false teachers, to those who deny the deity of Christ? John is going to make it very clear in this second epistle that this is something we need to beware of. He says in [verse 7](#), "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." What should be our relationship to false teachers? Follow me very carefully because this is going to be the nub of this epistle, and if you and I don't get this correctly, we are going to go haywire in our interpretation and come up with a pseudo-liberal viewpoint. All of this "love, love, love" stuff today actually is not biblical at all. We are told to love everybody, but there are some whom the Scriptures tell us not to love but to be very careful of. John writes, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . ." ([1John 2:15](#)). The things that are in the world are identified with the people who are in the world and who have made it as it is. Our love is to take the gospel to them, to give them the Word of God.

John's emphasis in his first epistle is upon love, but the key word in this second epistle is truth. Now when truth and love are in contrast and conflict, which one should prevail? If we get the answer to that, then that will determine our relationship to the false teacher, to the one who denies the deity of Christ. The so-called apostle of love is going to shock you and me out of our sentimental complacency and our sloppy notion of love. Which one should prevail -- truth or love? His startling reply is that truth comes first. Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He didn't say, "I am love," but He said, ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" ([John 14:6](#)). You have to come to the Father through Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Why? Because He's not only the Way, but He is the Truth. It was John who wrote later on that "God is love." After the Lord Jesus was here and had said that He was the Truth, then John said, "God is love" (see [1John 4:16](#)). My friend, love can be expressed only within the bounds and context of truth. Love can be expressed only within the limitation and boundary that Scripture sets. Therefore, what about the false teacher? May I say to you, you are not to love the false teacher. John is going to make that abundantly clear. In fact, he is going to say something quite amazing. He says, "You are not even to entertain him in your home. You are not in any way to receive him or to have fellowship with him." That is just about as strong as it possibly can be.

We need to notice another important word in order to get a proper perspective of what John will be talking about in this second epistle as well as in the third epistle. In the first epistle John said that we are to ". . . walk in the light, as he is in the light . . ." ([1John 1:7](#)).

Truth and light are the same; they are the Word of God. As we have already seen, love and truth are inseparable. Christ is the epitome of both; He is the incarnation of both. He is the Truth, and He is love. God is love, and He is God. In addition to truth, there is a second word which is featured in this brief epistle -- it is the word walk. In [2John 1:4](#) you will notice that John says, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father" (italics mine). And then in [2John 6](#), we read, "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it" (italics mine). Back in the first epistle, John wrote, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" ([1John 3:10](#)). That righteousness is Christ, and to deny the deity of Christ is certainly not to do righteousness -- the truth is essential. "Neither he that loveth not his brother" -- this is the second thing that is very important, the walk. With this second word, we go to the opposite end of the spectrum of the Christian life. Not only is truth essential, but the walk is essential, and therefore we are told to love the brethren.

This epistle, therefore, will not give us a balanced viewpoint of the first epistle. Our contemporary idea of "love, love, love," that we are to love everyone who comes along, I do not find in the Word of God. When John is speaking of love here, he makes it clear that it is love within the family of God. We need to be very careful about this because a great many are interpreting agape love as nothing in the world but sex. One morning I received a phone call from a lady who had come to know the Lord through our radio ministry. She said to me, "Dr. McGee, I just want you to know that I love you." She sort of caught herself and then said, "I hope you understand that I'm not talking about man and woman love. I'm saying that I love you as a brother in the Lord who led me to Christ." Well, I understand that, and I believe that is the kind of love which John is talking about here.

This love in the family of God needs to be exhibited today in the church. I think it is time for many of the churches that have built up a reputation for being fundamental in the faith to now exhibit love among the brethren. I would say that I need that in my own life; I am sure you need more love in your life also.

However, this love is not to slop over. We need to recognize that it has a boundary within the family of God. Along comes one of these heretics, as they did in John's day. He is apostate; he is actually an antichrist; that is, he denies the deity of Christ. John says, "When one of these fellows comes along you are not to extend love to him. You are not even to entertain him."

Outline

I. Love Expressed in the Boundary of Truth, [2John 1:1-6](#)
("Love in truth")

II. Life Is an Expression of the Doctrine of Christ, [2John 1:7-11](#)
(False doctrine leads to evil deeds.)

III. Personal Greeting, [2John 1:12-13](#)

(False teachers are not to be received by the Christian, but true teachers are to be received with joy.)

The message of John's second epistle is essential to having a proper perspective of what he has said in his first epistle. He deals here with the polarity of the Christian life -- truth and love. He answers the question: When truth and love come into conflict, which is to predominate, which is to have top priority?

Chapter 1

Love Expressed In The Boundary Of Truth (1:1-6)

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth [[2John 1:1](#)].

The Second Epistle of John is a personal letter from "the elder unto the elect lady and her children." The Greek word for "elder" is presbuteros (presbyter), and it has a twofold meaning. It can mean a senior citizen, referring to age, or it can be a title, referring to an office in the church, a minister or a teacher. I am sure that John is primarily calling himself an elder, speaking of his office in the church. I think he also infers the fact that he is now an old man. He is actually up in his nineties, approaching one hundred, as he writes this epistle. Notice that John does not call upon his office as an apostle. I think the reason is quite obvious: the one to whom he is writing accepts his authority. All he calls himself here is "the elder."

"Unto the elect lady and her children." The word electa could be the name of a prominent woman in the church, or it could be the local church itself that John has in mind. "Her children" could be either the physical children of the woman or the spiritual children of the church. These could be interpreted either way. I emphasize the church rather than the individual, applying it to the church at large and the church today. When I say the church, I am not thinking of any local church or any denomination, but the total body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. This epistle has been relevant for the church down through the centuries, and what is written here has been very productive in the life of the church. I believe that since our contemporary church has such an emphasis on love, we need this little epistle to cause us to shape up and to get a correct perspective of what love is.

"Whom I love in the truth." The word truth is emphasized in this epistle, and as I have said in the Introduction, it is the key word to the epistle. Christian love can only be expressed in the bounds of the family of God, those who have the truth. "The truth" here is the Word of God and also the One who is revealed in the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "Whom I love in truth" is the correct, literal translation. John is saying two things here: (1) That the object of his love must be another believer in Christ, a genuine believer; and also (2) that he is genuine in asserting this, that expressing his love is not just a pious platitude he is uttering here.

"And not I only but also all they that have known the truth." John embraces the rest of the body of believers here. They also love either this church or this particular woman in the church because of her outstanding testimony.

For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever [[2John 1:2](#)].

"For the truth's sake" means a defense of the truth. We need to recognize that the truth needs to be defended. We need to stand for the truth of God and for the Word of God. Many of our so-called conservative men have adopted a very sophisticated and blase method in an attempt to be clever in what they teach and preach. They will not come out flat-footed and say it just as it is, but they toy around with it and build up some clever alliteration. I'm for alliteration, as you well know, but the point is that the truth needs to be stated clearly.

I had an interesting encounter with a certain teacher several years ago. I was told by a student of his that he didn't believe a certain doctrine, and I quoted him on it. The man became very much irritated with me, which he had a right to be if I were wrong. I told him, "I'd like for you to clarify this. If you will just write me a letter and state clearly what you believe, I'll be very happy to read it and to make my apology." Instead of writing that kind of letter, he wrote a letter in which he made it clear he was highly incensed at me for even suggesting he didn't believe such and such a doctrine. So I wrote to him again and said, "All you have to do to clear this up is just to state clearly what you do believe." At the bottom of the page I wrote, "I believe -- -- -- " and "I do not believe -- -- -- " and I left him space for his answer, making it very easy for him to reply. That really irritated him, and I was blasted with another letter. So I dropped the matter and found out later that the reason he didn't answer was because he actually did not believe the doctrine I had questioned him about. But he had attempted to cover up his disbelief. My feeling is that I would respect him for what he believes. Although it is different from what I believe, I would never consider a man to be a heretic or an apostate who believes what he believes. But I cannot respect the fact that his method was and is today never to be clear on exactly what he does believe.

"For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." Thank God, we will have the truth forever. In this day when you can't believe politicians, you can't believe college professors, you can't believe the scientists, and you can't believe the military leadership, it's nice to have someone in whom you can believe -- the Lord Jesus Christ. "For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us" -- the indwelling Spirit of God makes these things real to us. "And shall be with us for ever" -- the truth will not change; it is unchangeable. Someone has put it like this: "What is true is not new, and what is new is not true." Like a great many generalizations that has some exceptions to it, of course, but usually it is true.

In verse 3 John adopts a greeting that is a little different from that of Paul and Peter and James and even himself.

Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love [[2John 1:3](#)].

There are three words here that we need to be clear on in our thinking. They differ without there really being a great difference in the sense that they all apply to the same thing. The words are love, mercy, and grace. John introduces the word mercy here in his greeting.

What is the difference between the love, the mercy, and the grace of God? We read in [Ephesians 2:4-5](#), "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)." This is such a wonderful scripture because it combines all three: Paul says that God is rich in mercy, and because of His great love for us, He saves us by grace. What is the love of God? Well, God is love. Before anything was created, God was love. Somebody says, "Whom did He love?" Well, the Trinity existed, and we know the love which existed between God the Father and God the Son. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes, "Love is that in God which existed before He would care to exercise mercy or grace." Love is the nature of God; it is what is called an attribute of God. God is love, but the interesting thing is that the love of God never saved a sinner. The love of God caused God to move in the direction of mercy and grace; it caused Him to exercise mercy and grace.

Now the question arises: What is the difference between mercy and grace? Dr. Chafer very exactly expresses it: "Mercy, on the other hand, is that in God which duly provided for the need of sinful man." God is rich in mercy. Why is He rich in mercy? Because He is love. And because God is love, He, by mercy, provided for the need of sinful man. But mercy didn't save man. Again, I quote Dr. Chafer: "Grace is that in Him which acts freely to save because all the demands of holiness have been satisfied." God today is free to act in grace. You are a sinner who cannot provide anything for God. You haven't anything to offer to Him. But now grace means that God can come to you, a lost sinner, and say, "I am love, and I am rich in mercy. I love you, and I have provided by My mercy a Savior for you." Now if you will trust Him, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" ([Eph. 2:8](#)).

There is a fine distinction here between these words, and someone will say, "It looks like a distinction without a difference." Well, there is a difference in that which doesn't differ. Salvation all stems from the love of God, but God does not save by His love or His mercy. After all, our God is a holy God, and the Bible says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . ." ([John 3:16](#)). You see, God did not so love the world that He saved the world -- He didn't do that. God so loved the world that by His mercy He provided a Savior for the world, and He can now save by grace.

There is something else here that is important to see. Salvation is not only the expression of the love of God, but it is also an expression of the justice and righteousness of God. We not only need [John 3:16](#), but we also need [Romans 3:26](#): "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." In order to justify you when you trust Christ, God has to be righteous and holy and just. He cannot simply open the back door of heaven and slip you in under cover of darkness. You and I are not fit for heaven. We are alienated from Him. We have no fellowship with Him. Communication broke down in the Garden of Eden, and He is the one who renewed it. Because He must be just and righteous, His mercy provided a

Savior, and it was because He loves you. He can be righteous and do this -- "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Therefore, John can now write, "Grace be with you" -- that is the way God saves you. "Mercy" -- mercy provided a Savior. "And peace" -- when you have all this, then the peace of God that passeth all understanding is going to keep your heart. As John said, "For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." You will know that these great truths are not something which God is going to change. He is not going to change His mind tomorrow and say, "Well, I'm going to act differently. I think public opinion is going in another direction, so I'll change and go with public opinion." God doesn't change; He is not a weather vane. I am reminded of the farmer who had on his barn a weather vane which said on it, "God is love." A preacher drove up to the farm and said to this man, "Do you mean that God's love is as variable as that weather vane?" The farmer said, "No, I don't mean that. I mean that it does not matter which way the wind is blowing, God is still love." My friend, that is true. Our God is love, and because He is love, He has provided salvation for you. He will never change.

"Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who died for you. He is "the Son of the Father" -- that is His position in the Trinity.

"In truth and love." Remember that love must be exercised in the context of truth. There are folk who write to me and say, "You are very dogmatic in your teaching." I always appreciate those letters because I am not always sure that I give that impression. I want to give that impression when I am teaching the Word of God. I am very dogmatic about it. Now if you ask me what I think I'll be doing this afternoon, I must say that I don't know because my wife hasn't decided yet! I'm not dogmatic about what I am going to do this afternoon. But right now I am writing about Second John, and I am very dogmatic about what he says here.

I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father [[2John 1:4](#)].

"Thy children" are either the physical children of this woman or the members of the local church. I think it could be either, and it probably refers to both. "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth." "Walking in truth" refers to the manner of life, meaning walking in obedience to the commandments from the Father. It is wonderful to have children who are walking in truth.

"As we have received a commandment from the Father." The commandment is that we walk in the light as He is in the light, that we order our lives by the Word of God.

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another [[2John 1:5](#)].

"The beginning" refers to the beginning of the ministry of Christ in His incarnation.

The teaching that the Lord Jesus gave was: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" ([John 14:15](#)). He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples" -- not

because you are fundamentalists but "if ye have love one to another" ([John 13:35](#), italics mine). John says that this is the commandment that we have had from the beginning, that we are to love one another.

Here we have it: walking in truth and loving one another (again, we are talking about loving fellow believers). This is the balance that is needed today in the church, or else any church will become lopsided. We can become oversentimental in the church. There is a lot of sentimental tommyrot going on, and it is as sloppy as can be: "Oh, we love each other. We have the agape love" -- and all that sort of thing. But are you walking in the truth? Are you really walking in the knowledge of the Word of God? All the apostles emphasized that we are to walk in love. My friend, this is very important in these days in which we live. It's wonderful if you are a fundamentalist -- I hope you are -- but I hope you are walking in love because you really are not a fundamentalist unless you are.

The objective polarity of the Christian faith and the Christian life is truth and love. John emphasized love in his first epistle, but he also said that that love is for the brethren, it is for believers, it is for those who are in Christ. He said, "My little children, I want you to love one another" -- that is, other believers. I do not quite understand this idea of watering down the Christian faith and saying that we are to love everybody, because I know that when you make a statement like that, you don't love everybody. It is just impossible to do that. There are too many in this world who are unlovely. A lot of us are unlovely, and, as a result, we are not loved. But God loves the world. We are not worth loving, but God loves us all. The important thing is that He tells believers to take the gospel to the world. That is the way that you and I can show our concern and love, if you want to call it that. We are to take the gospel to the lost because God loves them, and then if we take it to them, a love will be begotten in our hearts for those who are actually our enemies. The important thing to see is that God is love -- it is His attribute -- and His love has provided a Savior for us. But truth is also very important, and you cannot put love above truth, because when you do, then you sacrifice truth. This is John's emphasis in this second epistle.

And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it [[2John 1:6](#)].

What is love? It is to walk after His commandments. The Lord said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" ([John 14:15](#)). This is another way of saying the same thing. The Lord's commandments are more than the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are basic to government and basic to civilization, but the Christian is called to a higher plane where he is to produce in his life, by the Spirit (it is the fruit of the Spirit), love, joy, peace, longsuffering, etc. If these things are in us and abide in us, you and I are walking after His commandments. If they are not in us, we are not walking after His commandments.

"And this is love." Let me say it again: Love is not made in the parlor -- it is made in the kitchen. Love is not made in the bedroom -- it is made out there in the laundry room. Does she wash his clothes? Does he bring home his paycheck? Does he support his family? That is the way you express love in the family, and that is the way you express love in the church -- in your concern and in your help for others. You cannot say that you

are loving someone unless you have a concern for him, especially a concern for his spiritual welfare.

"And this is love, that we walk after his commandments." Now this is getting right down into shoe leather. This is getting right down where the rubber meets the road. This is sidewalk salvation. It is that which can walk down the street. You must recall that men like John and Paul were writing to people who lived in the Roman world. In Paul's day the emperor was bloody Nero. John saw one emperor after another rise who persecuted the Christians. Beginning with Titus, the Roman general who destroyed Jerusalem in B.C. 70, the persecution was severe. The Roman world was a brutal world, a cruel world, a world that was pagan to the core. And yet here were men and women who were walking down Roman roads, living in pagan cities, and they were walking after His commandments. They were translating the gospel into life. This is the thing that is desperately needed in our day.

"This is the commandment, That as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it." In other words, John is saying, "This thing is not to be put on ice. It is not something to be stored on the shelf. You have heard it from the beginning. The Lord Jesus taught this. Now let's get busy and walk in it. Let's manifest love to those outside."

Life Is An Expression Of The Doctrine Of Christ (1:7-11)

Again there arises before us the other end of this polarization: love is on one side, and the truth is on the other. John now issues his warning --

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist [[2John 1:7](#)].

"An antichrist" should read the antichrist. John said in his first epistle that already there were many antichrists and that there was the spirit of antichrist. How do we identify the spirit of antichrist? John gives us the answer: "Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." The spirit of antichrist is to deny the deity of Christ. It is to deny everything that is said about Him, everything that He said, and everything that He did for us in redemption by dying on the Cross and by being raised bodily from the dead. That is antichrist, and that is the spirit of antichrist.

The spirit of antichrist eventually will be headed up, I believe, not by one man but by two men, because two men are described in [Revelation 13](#). One of these is a great political ruler, an enemy of Christ -- he is against Christ. The other is a religious ruler who will imitate Christ and cause the world to worship the first beast, that is, to worship the political ruler. This is coming in the future, and everything this side of it is preparing the way for the coming of this one; so much so that when the political ruler and the religious ruler finally appear, the world will be ready for them. And it looks to me like the world is almost ready for them right now. To begin with, the political ruler will promise peace in the world, and for three and one-half years, he will do a pretty good job of it -- but it is not permanent. It will build up to a mighty catastrophe that is ushered in by the War of Armageddon which will last for approximately three and one-half years until the coming of Christ to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

At that time also, there will be one religion, and certainly we are moving in that direction even now. It will be a world religion where they will all pool their thinking. It will be a religion that doesn't really believe anything. There will be nothing to hold them together. We are so often urged today to get rid of that which separates us. My friend, if we get rid of all that separates us, there will not be anything left to hold us together. This is the problem with that type of thing. I am reminded of the story of the little boy who was walking down a jungle trail in Africa, carrying a polka dot umbrella. He met an elephant who said to him, "Where are you going, little boy?" The little boy said, "I'm not going anywhere," to which the elephant replied, "Well, I'm not either. Let me go with you." That is the kind of church union that is coming about today. They are going nowhere, they believe nothing, and therefore, they can all get together. This is the deceiver who is finally going to come, one to head up religion and one to head up the politics of this world. This is the Antichrist who is to come.

"For many deceivers are entered into the world." Gnosticism was running riot in John's day. Everywhere the gospel has gone, the cults have always followed. The "isms" always follow the preaching of the gospel -- they never go before. There were coming along at that time quite a few of what was known as the Gnostic sect which was actually divided into many groups. There were the Cerinthian Gnostics who followed a teacher in Ephesus whose name was Cerinthus. There is a tradition that John, who was the pastor of the Ephesian church, went down to the public bath and saw old Cerinthus taking a bath also. So John got out of the pool, grabbed up his clothes, and didn't put them on until he got outside, because he wouldn't have anything to do with that heretic. Well, that is a tradition and may or may not be true, but it certainly expresses the viewpoint of John in his letter here. The Cerinthian Gnostics correspond to several of the cults today in that they taught that Jesus and Christ were two different entities altogether and that the divine came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the Cross. There were also the Docetic Gnostics who denied the reality of the physical body of Christ. They said that the apostles thought they saw Jesus, but He actually was not a real person; He was just an appearance. We have a few cults which have picked up that heresy also. This is the reason John said in his first epistle, "We have seen Him. We have heard Him. We've gazed upon Him. We've handled Him. We know what we are talking about, and He was a real man."

Then there were certain Jewish sects in that day, and when Christianity came along, they picked up a great deal of the Christian teachings. Evidently, there was a group of Essenes down at Qumran where they found the Dead Sea Scrolls. And at Masada, which fell in B.C. 73, three years after the fall of Jerusalem, there were about 967 zealots who had also picked up some of the teachings of Christ. Both groups had twisted, distorted, and warped conceptions of the person of Christ.

The thing that John is saying here and which is all-important today is that there are many deceivers who have entered into the world. They seem to have sort of centered right here in Southern California. This is a great incubation center for all kinds of false teachings. I used to say, as I spoke across this country, "I come from a land of flowers, fruits, and nuts -- mostly religious nuts. I trust that you folk don't think that I am one of them!" The important thing is that the way you tell one who is true is by his viewpoint, his teaching, his beliefs concerning the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unless he thinks rightly of Him, everything else goes down the tube, and that person is a false teacher.

This does not mean that a person cannot hold a different view from what you and I would hold, for example, on election. Election has been a debatable point. John Wesley taught one thing, and John Calvin taught another viewpoint on it. But both of those men believed in the deity of Christ, and when you believe in the deity of Christ, it means you believe in the virgin birth, it means you believe the record that we have in the Word of God, and it means you believe in the apostles' doctrine which they taught in their epistles. There was a difference of opinion about election between these two men, but neither of them was a false teacher because both of them agreed on the essentials of the faith.

Let me use just one other illustration in this connection. I graduated and received my B.D. degree from my denominational seminary, as well as having done graduate work at Dallas Theological Seminary where I received my master's and doctor's degrees. That denominational school was amillennial, and they were dead set against the premillennial position. One of the professors and I became very good friends, and I admired him a great deal. That man could exalt the person of Christ. He could defend the virgin birth, the blood redemption, and the bodily resurrection of Christ in a way that I have heard no other person do. I actually sat in his classroom in tears as I heard him exalt the Lord Jesus. But he simply hated premillennialism. He didn't hate me -- he and I were good friends. Because of the fact that he exalted Christ, I never felt we ought to separate or that I ought to break fellowship with him. He was no antichrist. He was a believer. He was an intellectual, and even they are wrong in some things, so I just took it for granted that he was wrong in that particular sphere. I am sure that someday, when he and I get to heaven, we will be in agreement. It may be that both of us will have to change a little relative to our beliefs concerning these secondary matters. I do consider them secondary when you put them down beside the person of Christ. It is what you think of Him that is all-important.

John has emphasized that you are to walk according to the commandments of Christ, and the proof that you are a child of God is that you walk in love for the brethren. Now John has uttered a warning that many deceivers have come into the world. The believer today walks a very dangerous pathway through the world. To the left side of the pathway is the jungle of liberalism and apostasy. It is a beautiful but dangerous jungle because in it are beautiful but dangerous animals which are ready to devour us. I heard recently of a young man who had been in the armed forces and had had a real witness for Christ. But he apparently was lured to a seminary that destroyed his faith. This boy now has gone out into social service work, and his testimony is null and void. He is doing nothing but treading water. My heart goes out to a young fellow like that.

Then, on the opposite side of the pathway, there is a wilderness filled with rattlesnakes. It is the wilderness of extreme fundamentalism which is totally devoid of love. The only thing they think is important is to have the right doctrine. A brother may pat you on the back one day, but the next day, because you do not cross your t's or dot your i's as he does, he will attempt to destroy you by circulating a report in order to nullify your influence. Because of an overweening ambition, he will trample you underfoot. Your reputation is not safe in his hands, and he will exhibit hatred and bitterness rather than love toward you.

I have been in active Christian service since 1930, and I've met some of the great men of this century, giants of the faith who preached the truth. None of these men ever attempted to separate brethren or to dull the effectiveness of another's ministry by some slurring gossip. May I say to you, these men were great men, not only in doctrine but also in their lives. I have learned over the years that God's men who stand for the truth and who preach the Word of God, by and large, are men upon whom you can depend and who are very gracious in every manner.

I remember hearing this story of the late Dr. Harry Ironside when he was holding a conference at one of the prominent conference centers across this country. Some people go to these summer conferences for just one purpose, and that is to compare one speaker to another speaker and to try to set up some sort of conflict between them. I was told that a man came to Dr. Ironside at this conference and said to him, "Dr. Ironside, Dr. So-and-So was here last week and said such and such. But today you said the very opposite thing. Now which is correct?" The man was mentioning a minor point of doctrine. It was nothing vital but was simply a difference of opinion. All of us have differences of opinion, but we can differ without being disagreeable. So Dr. Ironside said to the man, "Well, I didn't know that Brother So-and-So taught that. That's quite interesting. Maybe I should look into it. I could be wrong." And then he walked away. The man stood there with his mouth open, because he surely couldn't get an argument there! May I say to you, I am confident that Dr. Ironside didn't feel that he was wrong, but he at least shut up that brother and kept him from trying to drive a wedge between brethren. This is the thing that, in my judgment, is actually more dangerous than liberalism.

I can spot a liberal, and I can say truthfully that I do not associate or fellowship with them. I have nothing in common with them. At one time, I was accused falsely by extreme fundamentalists of fellowshiping with a certain bishop during an evangelistic campaign here in Southern California. The truth is that I never even met the man. I had no reason to. He and I were in two different spheres of activity altogether, and I had no fellowship with him. But I have found that the most dangerous ones for me are the extreme fundamentalists. I would say that I am more afraid of them. They prattle pious platitudes and claim that they have the truth. But woe unto the man who disagrees with them on minor matters, especially the matter of separation, as if that were the all-important issue. Their priorities are not doctrine but assassination of character and name-calling on the lowest level. I have met both ministers and members of churches who frighten me more than a rattlesnake. The venom of bitterness and jealousy and hatred was dripping from their mouths as they feigned their love and devotion to Christ and to the truth. The great message of Second John is that truth walks in shoe leather, and if it does not, it is dangerous. My friend, we need to be very careful of both extremes of the spectrum of faith today.

John says that the way you are going to tell if one is not a child of God is: "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" ([1John 3:10](#)). Love and righteousness are the two manifestations of a child of God. We are to be aware of those who are not believers, the deceivers who deny the deity of Christ. John is saying that if you deny the deity of Christ, you are not a Christian. You may be religious, but you are not a Christian -- let's understand that. After all, Christian means one who is a follower of Christ, one who believes in Him. You cannot be a follower of Christ unless

you believe in His virgin birth, unless you believe in His deity, His miraculous life, and His work of redemption upon the Cross.

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward [[2John 1:8](#)].

You do not lose your salvation when you have fellowship with the wrong folk -- we need to understand that very clearly -- but you do put yourself in a dangerous position. It does mean that the minute you and I identify ourselves with a cult or go off into this type of thing which denies the deity of Christ, we have lost our reward. There will be no reward for a believer who has done this.

Every believer ought to be working for a reward, to be able to hear Him say someday, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (see [Matt. 25:21](#)). At the end of his life, Paul was able to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day . . ." ([2Tim. 4:7-8](#)). During his life, he wasn't sure of it, for he said that he didn't want to be disapproved when he came into the presence of Christ. Therefore, it will behoove us to be very careful not to be taken in by deceivers.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son [[2John 1:9](#)].

The word transgresseth is a very interesting word. In the Greek it is proago. Ago means "to go"; pro means "before." Proago means "to go before or to go ahead." Therefore, the meaning here is not so much to transgress as to go farther than is right. This is the meaning that Thayer gives in his Greek lexicon of the New Testament -- to go farther than is right. "Whosoever goes farther than is right, that is, goes to some extreme." This is what the Gnostics claimed for themselves. The word gnosis means "knowledge." The Gnostics claimed to have a little more knowledge than anyone else, something that made them super-duper saints. There are a few saints in that category today; they feel that they have something the rest of us don't have. Every now and then, I get a letter from some person who tells me I'm lacking somehow. I recognize that I am, but I don't feel they are the ones to tell me because they tell it from the viewpoint that they have it and I don't. They feel like they are super-duper, and they manifest no love for the brethren, which means they are not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. This is the thing that characterizes them.

In my Southland there were a group of people when I was a boy who were known as Holy Rollers. I attended several of their meetings when I was a young fellow just for the entertainment of watching them roll, and they actually rolled. Yet they preached the gospel, and many of them were real believers. Bishop Moore of the old Southern Methodist church was at a conference of Methodist preachers where he was approached by a young country preacher who asked, "Bishop Moore, do you think the Holy Rollers will go to heaven?" The bishop replied, "They will if they don't run past the place!" It seems to me that that is the condition of which John is speaking here: Whosoever goes

farther than is right, whoever becomes an extremist "and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God."

I was reading sometime ago about several theologians in the East who met with a group of preachers. Together they came to the conclusion that they no longer needed to answer the fundamentalists on the question of the virgin birth of Christ or the deity of Christ or whether Christ died for our sins. They feel like they have graduated from that. They have become highly intellectual, totally sanctified, and have reached the summum bonum of life. They are now up at the apex, looking down on all the rest of us poor folk who believe in the deity of Christ and His death for our sins. To my judgment they have transgressed, abide not in the doctrine of Christ, and have not God. No wonder they came to the conclusion that God was dead! But He wasn't dead. They were dead -- "dead in trespasses and sins" (see [Eph. 2:1](#)). "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God."

"He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." If you are abiding in the doctrine of Christ, you have God the Father, and you have God the Son, and you have access to the Father through the Son. We have access to God through Christ, by His marvelous, infinite grace if we abide in the doctrine of Christ.

The word abide means "to remain" -- this is a permanent arrangement. Someone told me that he had asked a liberal preacher in Los Angeles years ago what he thought about me. This liberal preacher is an outstanding man, a very fine man in many ways. I have always respected him because he is one of the few honest liberals I have met. He just came out and said that he believed practically nothing, and he stuck by his guns. I simply feel he should not be in the ministry. He is sort of like a man selling Fuller brushes who doesn't have any brushes to sell. This liberal preacher said, "Well, I respect McGee and his viewpoint. The thing is that it's old-fashioned, and he hasn't changed it in years. He apparently hasn't grown a bit." May I say to you, that is about the nicest compliment the man could have returned to me because I haven't changed and I intend for it to be that way. John is saying here that he who abides in the doctrine of Christ, who remains in it and doesn't change, has both the Father and the Son.

[If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed \[2John 1:10\].](#)

I cannot think of a stronger statement than this. We need to recall the background of this letter again. John is writing to "the elect lady," who may have been an outstanding woman in the church, noted for her hospitality. Apparently, she is a woman of means who can entertain guests lavishly. She is very generous. Evidently, some of these Gnostics came by, and she entertained them. Then she was under conviction about it, and she wrote to John. What should she do in a case like that? Should she entertain them? She would feel badly if she turned them away. What really should be her attitude toward an apostate, toward a heretic, toward one who denies the deity of Christ but pretends to be a follower of Christ? Should she entertain him in her home?

We need to understand also that there were no Howard Johnson motels or Holiday Inns or Hilton Hotels or Ramada Inns in the Roman Empire. The little inns that they had were pretty bare places to stay. An inn was not even a place where you got a bed. You had to

bring your own bed with you. All you did was rent a space to put down your little mat or pad on which you would sleep. Maybe there were people sleeping on both sides of you, at your head, and down at your feet -- all around you. That was the method for travelers in that day. So the homes of believers were always open to traveling evangelists and Bible teachers in the days of the early church. When these men would arrive in a town, there would always be some home where they would be entertained. Remember how Paul stayed in the home of Aquila and Priscilla when he was in Corinth? That was the method in the early church and the general practice of the day.

I can remember when I was a boy in our little town in West Texas that my mother would invite a visiting preacher to come for dinner and sometimes to spend the night. My dad never liked that, I can tell you. He was not a believer, and he didn't care to have a preacher for dinner or to have him spend the night. We were poor folk, and so the preacher didn't get lavish entertainment. But he would usually get fried chicken, and my mother really knew how to fry chicken. That was the practice in our little town. Even up to this day, the Holiday Inn hasn't gotten there; in fact, there isn't a motel of any kind or description there. In that day the preacher was entertained in the home, but today my recommendation to you is to entertain him in a motel or hotel. That would be the proper way to do it today. The average minister needs a great deal of privacy for study and prayer, and he cannot get it when he is entertained in a home. However, I must say that there are a few homes across this country that I have always enjoyed going into, because I can make myself at home and I feel at home there. They just let me do what I need and want to do, and it is a joy to be there.

This woman to whom John is writing is a woman of hospitality, and she has this question about entertaining false teachers. John lays it on the line here: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

Now John says something else that ought to alert every one of us today --

For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds
[[2John 1:11](#)].

If you entertain a false teacher, if you support him, you are a partner with him in his deeds. This is the reason that you ought to investigate everything that you give to as a Christian, because if you are giving to the wrong thing, God considers you a partner in it.

The Lord Jesus gave a parable in this connection in which He told about a man who was working for another man and was about to be fired (see [Luke 16:1-13](#)). The man called in all his employer's creditors and offered them a discount if they would pay their bills, which they, of course, were glad to accept. He did this so that after he was fired he would be able to appeal to them for help since he had helped them. That was crooked -- our Lord did not say it was right; He made it clear that it was wrong. He said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." They are clever out yonder in the business world. There's many a man trying to make a fast buck today. It is a case of dog-eat-dog. Therefore, if the man in the world is wise about the way he invests his money and the way he uses his money, what about you, Christian friend? Are you moved by some sentimental story, and do you give because of that? Are you moved by a

picture of a few orphans, of little children in foreign countries? Do you know that your money is getting to them? Are you motivated today by sentiment? If you are a partner in that which denies the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He is and stands for and all that He did for us, if you are supporting that sort of thing, God will hold you responsible for it. He said that the children of the world are wiser than we are. We ought to get smart. We ought to wise up to this and not be taken in by it. Charity has become a big racket today. Collecting money under false pretenses is one of the biggest rackets there is. This is the reason I sometimes mention that I haven't yet started an orphans' home for stray cats in the Aleutian Islands! In fact, I don't know whether there are any cats up there or not. My business is giving out the Word of God, and I hope this is your business, too.

Personal Greeting (1:12-13)

Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen [[2John 1:12-13](#)].

In other words, John says, "I can tell it better than I can write it." David said the same thing, ". . . my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" ([Ps. 45:1](#)). When David began to write that wonderful forty-fifth psalm, a psalm of praise to Christ, he simply said, "I wish I could tell it to you. I can say it better than I can write it." This is the reason I love the radio ministry. I can say it lots better than I can write it.

"The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen." Apparently, they were children of a sister of this elect lady, or it was a sister church sending greetings to this lady and to the local church there.

This is a tremendous little letter, and its message ought to alert every believer today.

Bibliography

(For Bibliography to 2 John, see Bibliography at the end of 3 John, page 61.)